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ABSTRACT

This paper describes general employment requirements for employment candidates in the skiing industry, as seen by Crested Butte Mountain Resort personnel. General educational requirements are primarily business skills, including: communications, computers, math, finance, accounting, economics, personnel administration, and psychology. Other general requirements that are not specifically taught, include: the ability to work as part of a team, higher-order thinking abilities, a sense of humor, a good work ethic, moral integrity, reliability, an appreciation for and understanding of the environment, and a service attitude. Customer service is considered essential to the industry. Specific requirements vary greatly by department. Departments include: (1) resort services, consisting of restaurants, rental shops, retail shops, ski instruction, nurseries, and building and grounds maintenance; (2) mountain operations; (3) property management; and (4) marketing and sales. Other jobs include computer specialists, accountants, travel agents, central reservationists, special events coordinators, and personnel administrators. Lastly, the successful employee must have a strong desire to work in the ski industry. (KS)

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WHAT CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN RESORT FEELS THE SKI INDUSTRY IS, IN GENERAL, LOOKING FOR IN COLLEGE GRADUATES

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By

Rick Jernigan

Editors' note: The following was presented as part of PANEL #1: PUBLIC, PRIVATE, PUBLIC. A transcription of the question and answer period can be found in Appendix B.

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Like most recreation oriented businesses, we suffer extreme fluctuations in the number of people we employ throughout a year. We employ approximately 125 people year round; while in the height of our season we employ up to 750 people. Obviously, we have distinct types of employment opportunities.

Criteria for hiring seasonal employees can vary radically given the condition of the economy, housing availability, etc. At times we can be very selective; however, in the last few years our selectivity has been severely limited by the lack of applicants; we have hired just about anyone who has applied. At the same time, we have been extremely successful with what we call our student program. We have found that a large number of students who are planning a semester off from college are very interested in working at ski resorts. In the spring we recruit at approximately 20 campuses throughout the Northwest, usually finding between 80 to 100 student employees. We arrange housing, jobs, and provide a scholarship if they finish the season. This program has worked very well for us. Many of our key people have started with us in the student program. Our Director of Sales and Controller are two positions that were filled by students who returned to college, finished their degrees, and returned to the ski area.

In regard to the full-time employees, there are several observations that can be made. Woody Allen once said that 50% of keeping your job was showing up. Dr. Ken Blanchard has modified that to say "60% is showing and being on time." We modify Dr. Blanchard's statement to say that 60% is showing on time and being prepared to work. Additionally, I feel another 15% of keeping a job is directly related to attitude. This leaves us with a very important 25%, and that is the ability to execute the specific job assignment. This is, hopefully, what was learned in college and from previous experience. This 25% factor is crucial because it's usually what will open the door to the job in the first place.

In our wish list for the ideal candidate it is very clear that we have a list of general requirements as well as some very specific requirements. The general requirements are primarily business skills.

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General Educational Requirements and Comments

1. Communication skills. This was rated in my straw poll of department heads as perhaps the most critical general abilities requirement. It includes both written and oral abilities. I believe that any college format has to provide a strong foundation in communication.

2. Computer skills. Virtually every manager and department head has access to a computer on a daily basis. They are used for scheduling, budgeting, forecasting, planning, ordering, inventorying, ect. As a minimum requirement, a college graduate should have a working knowledge of spreadsheet analysis software, such as Lotus.

3. Math skills. Severely lacking in most applicants.

4. Finance and accounting. Severely lacking in most applicants.

5. Economics. Where is your business coming from? What factors affect it? How do you adjust?

6. Personnel administration. I have department heads that manage 250 employees. A working knowledge of personnel management is critical to their success.

7. Psychology.

General Requirements Less Easily Taught, But No Less Important

1. Teamwork skills. The ability to work well in the scope of a group.

2. Thinking and logic skills. We have modified our interview procedure away from questions as "What have you done?" to "Tell me about a goal you have set for yourself and how you went about achieving it."

3. A sense of humor. Can it be taught? I'm not sure, but I can promise you that in my business it really helps.

4. A good work ethic. Many college graduates have demonstrated a work ethic just by getting through college, but there are still several people that apply for work, get a job, and think the world owes them a living. I can promise you that my company does not abide by this logic.

5. Moral integrity and reliability. Are these taught? I'm not sure, but they are crucial in the hiring of a long-term employee.

6. An appreciation and understanding of the environment.

7. A service attitude. Critical to success. We feel that this is so important that we have contracted with Dr. Ken Blanchard to consult with us on a yearly basis. Dr. Blanchard is the author of the *One Minute Manager* and consults on a concept call legendary service. The point made in the best selling book *Service America* is the same made ten years earlier in *Megatrends*, and that is that we have moved from an industrial nation to one that is information and service oriented. We feel strongly that service is what will differentiate us from our competitors. To stress how important this is, a White House Office of Consumer Affairs study showed that:

1. Ninety-six percent (96%) of all unhappy customers never complain directly to the company about rude or discourteous treatment.

2. Ninety percent (90%) of the customers dissatisfied with service just never return.

3. Every unhappy customer's negative story will be shared with at least nine other people.

4. Thirteen percent (13%) of all unhappy customers will relate their stories to more than 20 people.

5. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of customers who cease doing business with a company do so because of the company's attitude or indifference towards them.

Quite simply, we can't be successful as an industry if we can't find people that are cognizant of just how important service is.

Specific requirements vary greatly by department. For instance, in Resort Services which consists of restaurants, rental shops, retail shops, ski instruction, nursery, and building and grounds maintenance, we require the following:

1. Restaurant management
2. Culinary science
3. Catering
4. Education
5. Marketing
6. Physical education
7. Maintenance skills
8. Technical ski knowledge

In Mountain Operations specific skills include:

1. Vehicle maintenance
2. Lift maintenance
3. Mountain planning

4. Mountain and snow safety
5. First aid
6. Engineering
7. Construction
8. Design
9. Risk management
10. Snowmaking
12. Racing

In Property Management specific skills include:

1. Hotel management
2. Real estate
3. Accounting
4. Owner relations
5. Building maintenance

In Marketing and Sales skills include:

1. Marketing
2. Sales
3. Advertising
4. Public relations

Other specialty skills and jobs include:

1. Computer science
2. C.P.A. and accounting
3. Travel agents
4. Central reservationists
5. Special events coordinators
6. Personnel administrators

Obviously no position is limited to these specialized backgrounds. We have a philosophy major working as an accountant; a philosophy and religion major as Vice President of Marketing; a doctor of physics who works as a cook; a medical doctor working in retail, etc. These people are the exception; many of them have earned their position through previous work experience.

Lastly, the successful employee must have a strong desire to work in the ski industry. There are many tradeoffs in making that decision. On the negative side, there is usually: a very high cost of living; intense seasonality; a work force that is generally unskilled, short-term, and not dedicated, just to name a few. On the positive side: you generally live in a

beautiful, unspoiled, pristine environment; you also have immediate access to a wide variety of outdoor recreation.

Gone are the days of the ski school instructor being made marketing director. The industry has matured to the point where criteria for hiring require that a candidate be well-versed in communication, thinking, and business skills; that one possess strong, positive personal characteristics to get a good job done; that one has some very special abilities or specific skills in specific areas.